Hope, The Anchor for Our Souls

Mike Davies 22 November 2018

One of the analogies that Scripture uses for our life of faith is that of a sailing boat on a voyage. Therefore we speak of 'winds of doctrine' blowing through the church, 'waves of persecution' that we face and could face in the future. We might speak of the 'currents within our culture and circumstances' trying to sweep us to our destruction. So if we are not to be dashed against the rocks, if we are not to shipwreck our faith, we need a sure and steadfast anchor! An anchor which will hold us in place, keeping us safe and secure. This anchor must be strong enough and must be deployed in a place that will hold firm.

Hebrews 6:19-20 tells us, 'We have this sure and steadfast anchor, of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.'

In his letter to Timothy, Paul warns of Hymenaeus and Alexander who were among those who had shipwrecked their faith (1 Timothy 1:18-20). They had rejected (the word literally means 'thrown overboard') 'faith and a good conscience'. In 2 Timothy we get a better idea of where they went wrong – they claimed that the resurrection had already happened! (2 Timothy 2:18) That is, the resurrection of believers to be with Christ. In other words, they had taken the 'anchor' – the hope of an eternity with Christ – and abandoned it.

> The anchor that would hold us and keep us from the rocks is our hope in eternity.

Hebrews 11:1 tells us that 'faith is the assurance of things **hoped** for'. The rest of the chapter then makes it abundantly clear where our hope should lie:

- Verses 8-10 tell us that Abraham was looking forward to the city whose designer and builder is God.
- Verses 13-16 tell us that the Israelites were looking forward to a better country, that is, a heavenly one.
- Verses 24-27 tell us that Moses rejected the riches of Egypt for the sake of Christ and that he endured as 'seeing He who is invisible'.
- Those who did great exploits and those who suffered persecution and affliction endured because of their hope – a hope in an eternal relationship with Christ (verses 33-38).

The writer of Hebrews, desperately trying to encourage his readers to hold firm in the face of persecution and false doctrine, points them toward where their hope should lie. Not in the things this world has to offer, and not in comfort and convenience, but in an eternal inheritance; one worth persevering for (Hebrews 6:11-12). The anchor that would hold us and keep us from the rocks is our hope in eternity.

Hope in an Eternity with Jesus

Yet eternity in itself isn't necessarily appealing. In many books and films, life often quickly turns into a curse – an endless, meaningless existence still enduring all the pain and suffering of the human condition. As the atheist writer Herb Caen wrote, 'The only thing wrong with immortality is that it tends to go on forever.'

Our hope is not simply the quantity of life we are offered (eternity) but the quality of that life. Jesus tells us in John 17:3, 'This is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.' Our hope is in a future with Christ that is more amazing than we can comprehend (1 Corinthians 2:9), but which we can glimpse from afar. This life will have the following aspects:

1. **Resurrection:** We will be raised with glorified bodies – our present bodies are weak and perishing, but our resurrected bodies will be imperishable, glorious, powerful and spiritual (1 Corinthians 15: 42-49). No more pain, no more disease, no more death, no more sinful desires!
2. **Restoration:** He will restore everything to how He originally intended if to be. Not just man, but all of creation. There will be new heavens and a new earth – far more glorious and

beautiful than what we now see – and with sin removed (the effects of sin and the very presence of sin).

3. **Relationship:** Whilst we have the privilege of relationship with Christ already, our relationship with Him then will be even more glorious. The Holy Spirit is given as a deposit guaranteeing something even better to come!
4. **Revelation:** 1 Corinthians 13:12 tells us that now we see in part, but then we shall see Him fully, face to face – all of His beauty, majesty and glory.
5. **Recognition:** Jesus Himself will acknowledge us before the Father and will reward us. Imagine the moment, standing before Him, looking into His eyes and hearing the words, 'Well done good and faithful servant.'

As we consider the wondrous possibilities of such a life with Christ, we will surely agree with the Apostle Paul who said (and I paraphrase) 'If I live, then I live for Christ but to die is even better!' (Philippians 1:21) and that 'All things I consider rubbish compared to the surpassing excellence of knowing Christ for whom I've lost all things.'

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Abraham, Moses, Paul, all of the heroes of the faith, had the same anchor – a hope in an eternity with Christ, not in anything this world can give. We can have that same anchor, which means when our circumstances seem hopeless, hope remains!

Our lives, as someone once said, are merely a belch in eternity. We live for something far greater, far more beautiful and far more precious than anything this world can offer. Likewise, the worst this world can throw at us can be considered mere 'light and momentary troubles' in the light of eternity.

This is our anchor, and it is strong enough to withstand those 'winds of false doctrine', 'waves of persecution' and the dangerous 'currents of our culture'.